

# Beyond job satisfaction: A five-year prospective analysis of the dispositional approach to work attitudes

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Received 3 January 2006

Available online 26 May 2006

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## Abstract

Mounting evidence indicates a dispositional component to global job satisfaction. Unfortunately, however, relatively little attention has been given to the potential effects of dispositions on work-related attitudes other than global job satisfaction. We used a five-year prospective design to investigate the relationships of affective disposition with a set of attitudes oriented toward different aspects of work: the job, the organization, and the career. Job satisfaction, organizational commitment, job involvement, career commitment and career satisfaction each showed significant stability over five years. Cross-lagged panel analyses suggested that affective disposition plays an important role in the change of job attitudes across time. Analyses also support the hypothesis that affective disposition would be more weakly related to job involvement than to the other attitudes.

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*Keywords:* Affective disposition; Work attitudes

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## 1. Introduction

Job satisfaction is a historically popular variable in studies of vocational psychology. Employees' encounters with aspects of the work environment, such as work-related

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stressors and the nature of work tasks can influence their satisfaction and other reactions (e.g., meta-analyses by [Fried & Ferris \(1987\)](#) and [Jackson & Schuler \(1985\)](#)). Recent research also has indicated the existence of a personal or dispositional component to job satisfaction, however.

One piece of evidence for a dispositional influence is that job satisfaction is relatively stable across time ([Dormann & Zapf, 2001](#); [Elfering, Semmer, & Kaelin, 2000](#); [Gerhart, 1987](#); [Schaubroeck, Ganster, & Kemmerer, 1996](#); [Staw & Ross, 1985](#); [Steel & Rentsch, 1997](#)); a recent meta-analysis yielded a corrected correlation of .50 between Time 1 and Time 2 measures of job satisfaction over a relatively long time period (average elapse time = 3 years; [Dormann & Zapf, 2001](#)). Research typically shows, however, that job satisfaction is less stable when individuals change jobs, employers or occupations ([Dormann & Zapf, 2001](#); [Elfering et al., 2000](#); [Gerhart, 1987](#); [Schaubroeck et al., 1996](#); [Staw & Ross, 1985](#); [Steel & Rentsch, 1997](#)), suggesting that the work environment also affects job satisfaction. The [Dormann and Zapf \(2001\)](#) meta-analysis, for example, found corrected correlations between Time 1 and Time 2 job satisfaction of .35 for job changers and .48 for job stayers, and this difference is consistent with an environmental influence. The most important aspect of this finding for the dispositional approach to job satisfaction, however, is that job satisfaction is somewhat stable even for individuals who change work environments.

In spite of the well-documented stability of job satisfaction, little research has been directed at the stability and dispositional aspects of other job attitudes. Employees form attitudes about a variety of elements of work, and it is uncertain whether the research on the dispositional approach to job satisfaction generalizes to them. The present study addresses this issue.

Regarding job satisfaction, it seems probable that the temporal stability of satisfaction is partially caused by the effects of stable individual differences or dispositional factors and also is partially caused by the temporal stability of the work environment. That is, to the extent that the environment affects job satisfaction, stability of satisfaction might be due to the fact that the work environment remains the same. The long-term research trend on determinants of job satisfaction shows an earlier emphasis on environmental causes. The more recent trend, however, has examined job satisfaction as a possible consequence of personal dispositions, and it has tended to carry the burden of proving that the causes are not entirely environmental. Strong evidence for potential causes of the stability of job satisfaction is difficult to gather, however, because it requires measures of both person and environment variables over a period of time.

### *1.1. Dispositional influences on reactions to work*

As noted earlier, most of the research regarding dispositional influences on work-related attitudes has focused on global job satisfaction, and there is much less research about dispositions and any other work-related attitude. The present study examined dispositional influences on job satisfaction as well as on other work-related attitudes.

#### *1.1.1. Dispositions and job satisfaction*

Research has found that a number of dispositional variables, especially positive affectivity (PA; the tendency to experience positive feelings across time and places) and negative affectivity (NA; the tendency to experience negative feelings across time and places)

are associated with general or global job satisfaction (Connolly & Viswesvaran, 2000; Thoresen, Kaplan, Barsky, Warren, & de Chermont, 2003). The meta-analysis by Connolly and Viswesvaran (2000), for example, reported corrected correlations of .49 between PA and job satisfaction and  $-.33$  between NA and job satisfaction. Some research examines whether the temporal stability of job satisfaction is reduced when dispositions are controlled (e.g., controlling for NA and PA; Elfering et al., 2000; Schaubroeck et al., 1996), but contrary to expectations, these studies showed that controlling for dispositions has little effect on job satisfaction stability. Although this finding weakens the case for a dispositional approach to job satisfaction, it does not provide evidence for an environmental interpretation, except by default.

Although much of the research on dispositions and job satisfaction has focused on PA and NA, limited dispositional research has examined whether job satisfaction is influenced by the extent to which people have positive (or negative) affect in relation to a number of varied objects. In this approach, if one feels positive (or negative) about most objects, then perhaps he or she would also feel the same about the workplace. That is, PA and NA measures assess dispositional affect by asking people the extent to which they are consistently positive or negative *across-time*, but another indicator of dispositional affect is the extent to which people are consistently positive or negative *across-objects* occurring at one time. Judge and Bretz (1993) developed a measure of affective disposition along these lines (the Neutral Objects Satisfaction Questionnaire; NOSQ; adapted from Weitz, 1952). The NOSQ asks participants to indicate their level of satisfaction with a number of common objects that are not necessarily related to each other (e.g., your telephone number,  $8\frac{1}{2}'' \times 11''$  paper, your first name). Indeed, a few studies have shown that disposition measured in this way is related to both global and facet job satisfaction (Donovan, Drasgow, & Munson, 1998, Study 2; Judge & Hulin, 1993; Judge & Locke, 1993; Piccolo, Judge, Takahashi, Watanabe, & Locke, 2005). Furthermore, the NOSQ appears to measure an aspect of affective disposition that is largely distinct from both PA and NA (Fortunato & Goldblatt, 2002; Judge & Locke, 1993; Piccolo et al., 2005).

### *1.1.2. Dispositions and work attitudes other than job satisfaction*

Despite the increasing popularity of the dispositional approach to job satisfaction, relatively little effort has been made to examine the potential effects of dispositions on other work-related attitudes, such as organizational commitment, job involvement, career commitment and career satisfaction. It is especially important to conduct research in this area, given that studies have confirmed that these various work-related attitudes are empirically distinct from each other and from job satisfaction (Brooke, Russell, & Price, 1988; Carson & Bedeian, 1994; Mathieu & Farr, 1991). Thus research results regarding one attitude do not necessarily hold for others. As we will discuss below, for example, some job attitudes might be more dispositionally based than are others.

Similar to evidence about job satisfaction, indirect evidence of a dispositional component to other work-related attitudes is provided by research showing that many of them are relatively stable across time. Steel and Rentsch (1997), for example, reported a correlation of .41 between measures of job involvement administered 10 years apart. Similarly, some other work-related attitudes, such as organizational commitment (Farkas & Tetrick, 1989; Thompson & Van de Ven, 2002), career commitment (Thompson & Van de Ven, 2002), career satisfaction (Schneer & Reitman, 1997) and work centrality (Elfering et al., 2000) have been found to be relatively stable across time. As with the stability of

job satisfaction, one explanation for the stability of these attitudes is that they are partially caused by stable dispositional variables, but the stability of the work environment usually remains a second plausible explanation.

Some studies have directly investigated the relationships between dispositions and work-related attitudes other than job satisfaction. Recent research found that negative affectivity (NA) was unrelated to job involvement (Hirschfeld, Feild, & Bedeian, 2000; Rotondo, 1999) and was modestly related ( $r = -.15$ ) to occupational commitment (Hirschfeld et al., 2000). Related research found that extraversion was positively associated and neuroticism was negatively associated with career satisfaction (Boudreau, Boswell, & Judge, 2001; Seibert & Kraimer, 2001). A meta-analysis reported a corrected correlation of .35 between PA and organizational commitment and a corrected correlation of  $-.27$  between NA and organizational commitment (Thoresen et al., 2003).

Aside from examining the stability of work attitudes predicted by dispositions using the across-time measures of PA and NA, some research has examined the relationship between the dispositions as an across-objects measure and one attitude, job satisfaction (Judge & Bretz, 1993). No attention, however, has been given to the relationship between the across-objects measures of disposition and job attitudes other than job satisfaction. As mentioned above, such research is especially important because the across-objects measures are largely distinct from PA and NA (Fortunato & Goldblatt, 2002; Judge & Locke, 1993; Piccolo et al., 2005).

The present study reports a five-year prospective investigation of the relationships between affective disposition and work-related attitudes. We expected to find dispositional effects on job satisfaction. Using an across-objects measure of affective disposition, we extended the dispositional approach to an entire set of additional work-related attitudes: attitudes about the job, about the organization, and about the career. This feature makes the current study unique, because most research has focused on examining the dispositional basis of only a small set of work-related attitudes. Furthermore, the current study extends past research by using an across-objects measure of dispositions rather than PA or NA. Finally, we examined dispositional effects on these work-related attitudes in conjunction with environmental stability or change.

## 1.2. Hypotheses

Based on the reasoning described above and consistent with prior research, we predicted that each of the five work-related attitudes would be stable across time (*Hypothesis 1*). This is widely established for job satisfaction (meta-analysis by Dormann & Zapf, 2001), but less so for the other work-related attitudes. This finding would be suggestive of a stable dispositional factor in these job attitudes but would leave stable work environment as an alternative explanation.

We also hypothesized that the five job attitudes would yield significant temporal stability among employees regardless of whether they changed employers or not (*Hypothesis 2a*), but that the attitudes would be more stable among individuals who had remained employed by the same organization than among individuals who had changed employers (*Hypothesis 2b*). This would illustrate the stability of attitudes while also examining the effects of environmental change.

Stability of work-related attitudes, especially among individuals who have changed work environments, is good indirect evidence for the effects of dispositions. Additional,

more direct evidence would be provided by examining relationships between dispositional measures and the attitudes. All work-related attitudes are not the same (Brooke et al., 1988; Carson & Bedeian, 1994; Mathieu & Farr, 1991), however, and this is one reason why even though some stability has already been established for job satisfaction by previous research, it is still necessary to examine the stability of a wider set of attitudes such as those examined in the present study.

Because a variety of work-related attitudes are examined, it is possible for them to be differentially stable or differentially affected by stable dispositions. We propose that the reason some of the work-related attitudes commonly examined in psychological research are more susceptible to affective dispositional influences is that they are more affective themselves. Specifically, we predicted that affective disposition would be related to each of the five job attitudes (*Hypothesis 3a*) but that affective disposition would be more strongly related to job satisfaction, organizational commitment, career commitment and career satisfaction, than to job involvement (*Hypothesis 3b*). We based this hypothesis on the fact that job involvement lacks much of the affective, emotional and evaluative content found in most other job attitudes, and thus *affective* disposition should yield relatively modest relationships with it. For example, the job involvement item, “Most of my interests are centered around my job” does not represent any direct evaluation or emotional response toward one’s job, whereas the job satisfaction item, “Generally speaking, I am very satisfied with my job” more clearly represents an evaluative and emotional response to one’s job.

Hypothesis 3b could imply that job involvement would be less stable across time than are the other work-related attitudes. Empirical evidence, however, suggests that job involvement is as temporally stable as job satisfaction (Steel & Rentsch, 1997), illustrating the importance of directly linking affective dispositional variables to job attitudes, rather than relying on temporal stability of job attitudes to infer *dispositional* effects.

In addition to the hypotheses about attitude stability due to dispositions, the present study was able to examine the potential for dispositions to predict the direction of attitude change. Although attitudes might be relatively stable, they no doubt do change somewhat over time. Dispositions are expected to be linked overall to attitude stability rather than to change, but they might contribute to the *direction* of the attitude change that does take place. The question is, are people with positive dispositions more likely to experience attitude change in the same or a different direction from people with negative dispositions? Employee attitudes have not been examined regarding this question, but a case can certainly be made that positive and negative people act and react differently over time. In principle, people with positive dispositions are more likely to seek out, be sensitive to, and remember favorable events and experiences, while those with negative dispositions do the opposite (Bowling, Beehr, Wagner, & Libkuman, 2005; Judge & Larsen, 2001; Levin & Stokes, 1989; Necowitz & Roznowski, 1994). If this happens consistently over time, it is possible that the attitudes of employees with positive dispositions might become progressively more positive, and the attitudes of employees with negative dispositions might become progressively more negative. The present data set was examined to determine the potential for dispositions to predict the direction of attitude change over time.

Overall then, the current study of dispositions in relation to attitude stability and change examined (1) the stability of work-related attitudes beyond job satisfaction, (2) both affective disposition and environmental stability as explanations for attitudinal stability, (3) the potential differences in stability of different work-related attitudes over a

five-year period, and (4) the ability of dispositions to predict the direction of attitude change.

## 2. Method

Data were collected in 1996 and 2001 as part of the Adult Longitudinal Panel (e.g., see Adams, Beehr, Prescher, & Lepisto, 2002; Jones, McCleary, & Lepisto, 2002; Lepisto, 1997). This panel of data has been employed primarily for purposes in the domain of marketing research focused on adults as they age, but in these two waves we were allowed to add the variables necessary to conduct the present study of affective disposition and work-related attitudes. At Time 1, 1008 people responded. Of these, 292 held full-time employment, making them eligible for the present study. At T2, 215 of these responded and still held full-time jobs, and they were included in the analyses. The average respondent was 48 years old at Time 1. Sixty-seven percent of respondents were male, and 94 percent were Caucasian.

### 2.1. Measures

#### 2.1.1. Job satisfaction

Job satisfaction was measured with the average of three items from (Hackman & Oldham, 1980). Each item was answered on a 7-point scale from strongly disagree (1) to strongly agree (7). A sample item is, “Generally speaking, I am very satisfied with my job.” The  $\alpha$  was .72 for Time 1 and .76 for Time 2.

#### 2.1.2. Organizational commitment

The average of six items from the Organizational Commitment Questionnaire (OCQ; Porter, Steers, Mowday, & Boulian, 1974) was used to measure organizational commitment. A sample item is, “I am proud to tell others that I am part of the organization where I work.” Each item was answered on a 7-point scale from strongly disagree (1) to strongly agree (7). The  $\alpha$  was .90 for Time 1 and .91 for Time 2.

#### 2.1.3. Job involvement

Job involvement was measured using the average of five items from Kanungo (1982). Each item was answered on a 7-point scale from strongly disagree (1) to strongly agree (7). A sample item is, “Most of my interests are centered around my job.” The  $\alpha$  was .81 for Time 1 and .85 for Time 2.

#### 2.1.4. Career commitment

The average of five items from Carson and Bedeian (1994) was used to measure career commitment. Each item was answered on a 7-point scale from strongly disagree (1) to strongly agree (7). A sample item is, “My line of work/career field is an important part of who I am.” The  $\alpha$  was .86 for Time 1 and .88 for Time 2.

#### 2.1.5. Career satisfaction

Career satisfaction was measured with the average of three items from (Adams, 1999). Each item was answered on a 7-point scale from strongly disagree (1) to strongly agree (7). A sample item is, “I have reached the career goals that I set for myself.” The  $\alpha$  was .86 for Time 1 and .91 for Time 2.



#### 2.1.6. *The affective disposition index*

Affective disposition was measured as the mean score on a 20-item scale based on principles previously developed by Weitz (1952) and Judge and Bretz (1993) and that fit the construct definition (Gerhart, 2005). Participants were asked to report their levels of affect toward or satisfaction with a widely varying set of unrelated, non-work-related objects. Each item was answered on a 7-point scale from very dissatisfied (1) to very satisfied (7). Sample items included, “Personal material possessions,” “Personal health,” “Helping others,” and “Leisure activities.” The  $\alpha$  was .87 for Time 1 and .88 for Time 2. A preliminary study examining the correlation of this index with Judge and Bretz’ (1993) Neutral Objects Satisfaction Questionnaire (NOSQ) a more established measure of affective disposition was conducted with 117 undergraduate students yielded a criterion validity correlation of .58 ( $r$  corrected for unreliability in both measures = .72). This relationship is similar in magnitude to the relationships between different measures of other dispositions such as emotional stability, and it is greater than the relationships between different measures of conscientiousness (Judge & Bono, 2001). Also, consistent with the notion that the index assesses a stable trait, the 5-year test–retest reliability of the scale was .71. This degree of temporal stability is similar to that of other dispositional measures, such as trait positive and negative affectivity.

#### 2.1.7. *Change in employer*

Change in employer was measured at Time 2 with the question, “How many years have you worked for your current (or most recent employer?” The Time 2 questionnaire was administered approximately 5 years after the Time 1 questionnaire, and responses to this question were re-coded into a dichotomous variable that reflected whether or not one had changed employers in the last 5 years (0, did not change employers; 1, did change employers).

#### 2.1.8. *Demographics*

The questionnaire also included items asking participants to report their age, gender and ethnicity.

### 3. Results

Table 1 presents the descriptive statistics, reliabilities, and correlation matrix for the study variables.

#### 3.1. *Hypothesis 1: Stability of attitudes over time*

Stability of the attitudes was tested by examining both correlational analyses and mean difference tests. Significant correlations ( $p < .01$ ) were found between the Time 1 and Time 2 measures of job satisfaction ( $r = .53$ ), organizational commitment ( $r = .58$ ), job involvement ( $r = .68$ ), career commitment ( $r = .67$ ) and career satisfaction ( $r = .67$ ). These results, which represent simple, indirect evidence of a dispositional component to each of the five work-related attitudes, are consistent with Hypothesis 1, which stated that the attitudes would be stable. Regression analyses not presented in the tables found that each of the job attitudes displayed significant temporal stability after age, gender, and ethnicity were controlled. This finding provides additional support for Hypothesis 1.

Table 1  
Descriptive statistics, *zs* and correlations for all variables

Variables	M	SD	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15
1. Affective disposition (T1)	5.37	0.73	.87														
2. Affective disposition (T2)	5.46	0.73	.71**	.88													
3. Job change status	0.22	0.42	−.01	.03	NA												
4. Job satisfaction (T1)	5.16	1.20	.36**	.38**	−.09	.72											
5. Job satisfaction (T2)	5.18	1.25	.45**	.50**	−.02	.53**	.76										
6. Organizational commitment (T1)	5.01	1.42	.30**	.28**	−.04	.67**	.39**	.90									
7. Organizational commitment (T2)	4.85	1.55	.36**	.38**	.09	.46**	.64**	.58**	.91								
8. Job involvement (T1)	3.72	1.28	.14*	.12	−.01	.41**	.35**	.51**	.39**	.81							
9. Job involvement (T2)	3.63	1.36	.14*	.10	−.08	.30**	.43**	.39**	.45**	.68**	.85						
10. Career commitment (T1)	5.05	1.40	.27**	.30**	−.07	.53**	.51**	.55**	.43**	.62**	.53**	.86					
11. Career commitment (T2)	5.01	1.53	.35**	.39**	−.12	.42**	.69**	.35**	.52**	.50**	.64**	.67**	.88				
12. Career satisfaction (T1)	3.82	1.64	.39**	.44**	−.08	.54**	.49**	.36**	.42**	.31**	.27**	.49**	.44**	.86			
13. Career satisfaction (T2)	4.22	1.82	.48**	.47**	−.06	.46**	.62**	.30**	.44**	.23**	.36**	.46**	.56**	.67**	.91		
14. Age	53.33	8.43	.16*	.24**	−.05	.14*	.14*	.13	.08	.07	.11	.16*	.12	.18**	.26**	NA	
15. Gender	1.34	0.53	−.02	−.04	−.01	.09	.01	.19**	.16*	−.01	−.01	.06	.01	.05	.02	−.06	NA
16. Ethnicity	1.07	0.24	.04	.02	.00	.00	−.03	−.08	−.07	−.05	−.08	−.05	.00	−.11	−.04	.00	.07

Note. *N* = 214–215. *zs* are on the diagonal. For job change status 0, no; 1, yes. For gender 1, male; 2, female. For ethnicity 1, Caucasian; 2, Non-Caucasian.

\* *p* < .05.

\*\* *p* < .01.



Regarding stability over time, the correlations from Time 1 to Time 2 show the degree to which people with higher scores at one time are the same people who have higher scores at another time. Another version of stability is the degree to which mean scores or levels of attitudes remain stable over time (Newton & Keenan, 1991; Staw & Cohen-Charash, 2005). Indeed, Elfering et al. (2000) argued that both correlations and comparisons of mean attitude scores should be used to examine the temporal stability of job attitudes. For mean scores, a series of paired-samples *t*-tests found that career satisfaction significantly increased across time for the sample as a whole ( $t(214) = -4.21, p < .01$ ), but that none of the other work-related attitudes displayed significant temporal changes in means.

### 3.2. Hypothesis 2: Attitude stability for job leavers and stayers

As predicted by Hypothesis 2a, job satisfaction ( $r$  for leavers = .40;  $r$  for stayers = .58), organizational commitment ( $r$  for leavers = .45;  $r$  for stayers = .63), job involvement ( $r$  for leavers = .53;  $r$  for stayers = .72), career commitment ( $r$  for leavers = .64;  $r$  for stayers = .67), and career satisfaction ( $r$  for leavers = .63;  $r$  for stayers = .68) each yielded significant ( $p < .01$ ) levels of temporal stability among employees regardless of whether or not they changed employers.

Hypothesis 2b predicted that the five work-related attitudes would be more stable for individuals who remained with the same employer than for individuals who changed employers. Evidence for this can be seen in the consistent differences in stability correlations for leavers and stayers presented in the previous paragraph. This hypothesis was also tested using moderated regression, in which the effects of changing employers on the relationship of an attitude at Time 1 to the same attitude at Time 2 were examined. As shown in Table 2, changing employers had a significant effect ( $p < .05$ ) on the stability of organizational commitment and had marginally significant effects ( $p < .10$ ) on the stability of job

Table 2  
Moderated regressions for the effects of changing organizations on job attitude stability

Criteria	Ordered predictors	$\beta$	$R^2$ change
Time 2 job satisfaction	1 Organizational change status (A)	-.441 <sup>†</sup>	.285**
	Time 1 job satisfaction (B)	.140	
	2 A $\times$ B	.605 <sup>†</sup>	.011 <sup>†</sup>
Time 2 organizational commitment	1 Organizational change status (A)	-.519**	.352**
	Time 1 organizational commitment (B)	.119	
	2 A $\times$ B	.638*	.015*
Time 2 job involvement	1 Organizational change status (A)	-.195	.473**
	Time 1 job involvement (B)	.279	
	2 A $\times$ B	.499 <sup>†</sup>	.009 <sup>†</sup>
Time 2 career commitment	1 Organizational change status (A)	.026	.455**
	Time 1 career commitment (B)	.609**	
	2 A $\times$ B	.078	.000
Time 2 career satisfaction	1 Organizational change status (A)	-.043	.452**
	Time 1 career satisfaction (B)	.578**	
	2 A $\times$ B	.112	.001

Note.  $N = 215$ .  $\beta$ s are from final step (2).

\*  $p < .05$ .

\*\*  $p < .01$ .

<sup>†</sup>  $p < .10$ .

satisfaction and job involvement, suggesting environmental effects on attitudes. As detailed in the above paragraph, all of these differences were in the predicted direction. Thus, Hypothesis 2 was partially supported.

Most of the research on job satisfaction stability provides correlations between job satisfaction at one time and job satisfaction at a later time as evidence of stability. In effect, these *between-person* findings of stability mean that *ranks* of people versus each other on job satisfaction do not change much. Everybody in the sample could be gaining or losing on job satisfaction scores, but their scores' rankings are in a similar position (rank) compared to each other. In addition to correlations, other ways to test stability of job satisfaction would entail methods that examine *within-person* changes or stability. Some of the simplest ways involve calculating and examining change scores within each person. There is a need for examination of more within-person changes as well as between-person changes.

Thus, in addition to the between-subjects analyses, we also used participants' absolute differences between T1 and T2 job attitudes to examine the within-subject stability of job attitudes. These analyses indicated that job change status was significantly related to the within-subject absolute differences of job satisfaction ( $t(214) = -2.37, p < .01$ ) and organizational commitment ( $t(214) = -2.62, p < .01$ ). These findings suggest more within-subject stability for job satisfaction and organizational commitment among individuals who did not change employers than among individuals who did change employers and are consistent with the results of the between-subject analyses reported above. In sum, both the between and within-subjects analyses provide partial support of Hypothesis 2.

### 3.3. Hypothesis 3: Relationships of affective disposition to work attitudes

Hypothesis 3a predicted that affective disposition would be related to all five work attitudes. Affective disposition was significantly ( $p < .01$ ) related to job satisfaction (the four *rs* ranged from .36 to .50 for Time 1 and Time 2 affective disposition with Time 1 and Time 2 satisfaction), organizational commitment (*rs* ranged from .28 to .38), career commitment (*rs* ranged from .27 to .39) and career satisfaction (*rs* ranged from .39 to .48), but it was only weakly related (at T1; both *rs* = .14) or unrelated (at T2; *rs* = .10 and .12, ns) to job involvement (see Table 1). Hypothesis 3a, therefore, was supported for job satisfaction, organizational commitment, career commitment and career satisfaction, and partially supported for job involvement.

Hypothesis 3b predicted that affective disposition would be less strongly related job involvement than to the other work attitudes. Further analyses therefore compared the strength of the four relationships between affective disposition and job involvement (i.e., disposition measured at two times by involvement measured at two times) with the strength of the 16 relationships between affective disposition and the other four job attitudes (i.e., disposition measured at two times and four job attitudes measured at two times). Testing the differences between these dependent correlations, for each of the 64 such pairs of correlations, the relationship between affective disposition and job involvement was weaker ( $p < .05$ ) than the relationship between affective disposition and the other attitude in every pair. Likewise, the average of the four correlations between affective disposition and job involvement was .12, and the average of the 16 correlations between affective disposition and the other four attitudes was .38. As a whole, these findings provide very strong support for Hypothesis 3b.

Table 3

Hierarchical regressions for the relationships between Time 1 affective disposition and Time 2 attitudes

Criterion	Ordered predictors	$\beta$	$R^2$ change
Time 2 job satisfaction	1 Demographic controls		.022
	2 Time 1 affective disposition	.446**	.193**
Time 2 organizational commitment	1 Demographic controls		.044*
	2 Time 1 affective disposition	.370**	.133**
Time 2 job involvement	1 Demographic controls		.020
	2 Time 1 affective disposition	.132	.017
Time 2 career commitment	1 Demographic controls		.017
	2 Time 1 affective disposition	.344**	.115**
Time 2 career satisfaction	1 Demographic controls		.074**
	2 Time 1 affective disposition	.453**	.199**

Note.  $N = 214$ . Demographic controls were age, gender (1, male; 2, female), ethnicity (1, Caucasian; 2, Non-Caucasian).  $\beta$ s are from final step (2).

\*  $p < .05$ .

\*\*  $p < .01$ .

Furthermore, hierarchical regression analyses controlling for age, gender, and ethnicity indicated that Time 1 affective disposition was significantly ( $p < .01$ ) related to Time 2 job satisfaction, Time 2 organizational commitment, Time 2 career commitment and Time 2 career satisfaction, but not to Time 2 job involvement (see Table 3). These findings provide additional support for Hypothesis 3b.

### 3.4. Summary analysis: Amount of stability accounted for by dispositions

We also conducted an analysis to determine whether controlling for affective disposition would reduce the stability of work-related attitudes. In these analyses we compared the partial correlations (controlling for Time 1 affective disposition) between Time 1 and Time 2 work-related attitudes with the zero-order correlations between Time 1 and Time 2 work-related attitudes and calculated the percent of decrease in  $R^2$  that resulted from controlling for affective disposition. Controlling for affective disposition had the strongest effects on the stabilities of job satisfaction (reduction in  $r^2 = 46$  percent) and career satisfaction (reduction in  $r^2 = 38$  percent). The stabilities of organizational commitment (reduction in  $r^2 = 27$  percent) and career commitment (reduction in  $r^2 = 22$  percent) were also reduced after affective disposition was controlled. However, controlling for affective disposition did not result in any appreciable decrease in the stability of job involvement (reduction in  $r^2 = 4$  percent). This latter finding was not surprising, given that earlier analysis had found that affective disposition was at best only modestly related to job involvement.

### 3.5. Affective disposition and temporal changes in job attitudes

Finally, we conducted analyses to examine whether affective disposition could affect temporal changes in job attitudes. In other words, do individuals high in affective disposition experience different types of changes in job attitudes over time than do individuals low in affective disposition?

To examine this possibility, LISREL 8.14 (Joreskog & Sorbom, 1996) was used to conduct cross-lag panel analyses for each of the five work-related attitudes. Separate saturated models were tested for each job attitude. These analyses using observed variables included paths from Time 1 affective disposition to Time 2 affective disposition and to Time 2 work-related attitude, and paths from Time 1 work-related attitude to Time 2 work-related attitude and to Time 2 affective disposition.

As shown in Table 4 the results suggested that affective disposition is related to between-subject changes in job attitudes. Specifically, the paths leading from Time 1 affective disposition to Time 2 work-related attitude were significant for job satisfaction ( $\beta = .30$ ,  $p < .01$ ), organizational commitment ( $\beta = .20$ ,  $p < .01$ ), career commitment ( $\beta = .18$ ,  $p < .01$ ) and career satisfaction ( $\beta = .26$ ,  $p < .01$ ), but not job involvement. Although the  $\beta$ s indicate relatively small effect sizes, the results suggest that affective disposition was related to between-subject changes in four of the job attitudes. Specifically individuals high in affective disposition at T1 scored relatively higher on T2 job attitudes than would be expected based on their T1 job attitude score. Likewise, individuals low in affective disposition at T1 scored relatively lower on T2 job attitudes than would be expected based on their T1 job attitude score. This is consistent with the idea that more positive people (dispositionally) might monitor and pay more attention to positive elements of their environments, thereby leading them to even more positive attitudes, while more dispositionally negative people do the opposite.

Unexpectedly, the paths leading from Time 1 job satisfaction to Time 2 affective disposition ( $\beta = .14$ ,  $p < .01$ ), from Time 1 career commitment to Time 2 affective disposition ( $\beta = .12$ ,  $p < .05$ ) and from Time 1 career satisfaction to Time 2 affective disposition

Table 4  
Cross-lagged panel analyses for affective disposition and work-related attitudes

Criterion variable	Predictors	$\beta$
T2 Job satisfaction	T1 Affective disposition	.30**
	T1 Job satisfaction	.42**
T2 Organizational commitment	T1 Affective disposition	.20**
	T1 Organizational commitment	.52**
T2 Job involvement	T1 Affective disposition	.05
	T1 Job involvement	.67**
T2 Career commitment	T1 Affective disposition	.18**
	T1 Career commitment	.62**
T2 Career satisfaction	T1 Affective disposition	.26**
	T1 Career satisfaction	.57**
T2 Affective disposition	T1 Affective disposition	.66**
	T1 Job satisfaction	.14**
T2 Affective disposition	T1 Affective disposition	.69**
	T1 Organizational commitment	.07
T2 Affective disposition	T1 Affective disposition	.71**
	T1 Job involvement	.02
T2 Affective disposition	T1 Affective disposition	.68**
	T1 Career commitment	.12*
T2 Affective disposition	T1 Affective disposition	.63**
	T1 Career satisfaction	.19**

Note.  $N = 214$ .

\*  $p < .05$ .

\*\*  $p < .01$ .

( $\beta = .19, p < .01$ ) also were significant. It should be noted, however, that these  $\beta$ s were all weak and were smaller than those reported above for T1 affective disposition to T2 job attitudes; this suggests that T1 job attitudes have only modest effects on temporal changes in affective disposition.

#### 4. Discussion

The results of the current study suggest that future research is needed that applies the dispositional approach to work-related attitudes other than job satisfaction. A dispositional approach predicts that the attitude would be stable over time, and that direct measures of dispositions would be related to attitudes (Gerhart, 2005; Staw & Cohen-Charash, 2005). Both of these types of evidence were presented in the present study. In addition, the present study is one of the few to examine reasons for stability of such a wide variety work-related attitudes, and it suggests that dispositions should be considered in future research on work attitudes.

As noted earlier, the type of measure of affective disposition used in the current study is relatively independent of positive and negative affectivity scales (Fortunato & Goldblatt, 2002; Judge & Locke, 1993; Piccolo et al., 2005), which are the dispositional measures that have received much of the attention in job satisfaction research. Thus, the affective disposition measure used here likely predicts incremental variance in job attitudes controlling for the effects of PA and NA. Indeed, future research using this form of dispositional measure is warranted.

We predicted that job involvement, when compared to other work-related attitudes, would have a smaller dispositional component. This prediction was based on the notion that job involvement items generally lack the evaluative or affective content found in measures of other work attitudes. Although job involvement yielded a relatively high degree of temporal stability, affective disposition yielded weak and often non-significant relationships with job involvement. Perhaps job involvement is temporally stable because it is partially the result of some individual difference(s) not examined in the current study. One suggestion is that employee *values* might account for the stability of job involvement (Steel & Rentsch, 1997). In fact, job involvement might actually *be* a value. Just as people can value family or country, they can value work. An employee might generally value work, and this helps to determine his or her level of involvement in the specific jobs. This possibility should be addressed in future research.

Several findings led to the conclusion that multiple work attitudes can be affected by both dispositions and environments. First, all five of the work-related attitudes exhibited some temporal stability and were related to dispositions. Second, changing environments (i.e., employers) lowered the stability of work-related attitudes. This was true for organizational commitment, job satisfaction and job involvement, but not for career commitment or career satisfaction. This suggests that some work attitudes might be more susceptible to environmental changes than others, although we did not anticipate this prior to the study. Just as the present study sought and examined reasons for differential effects of dispositions on work attitudes (based on affect in the attitude measure), future research might be undertaken to examine reasons for differential effects of environment on specific attitudes.

The cross-lagged panel analyses suggested that affective disposition influences the nature of temporal changes in job attitudes. More specifically, individuals high in affective dis-

position generally experienced temporal gains in job satisfaction relative to other participants, whereas individuals low in affective disposition generally experienced temporal losses in job satisfaction relative to other participants. This finding fits earlier theorizing about the role that employee dispositions play in the development of job attitudes (Bowling et al., 2005; Judge & Larsen, 2001; Levin & Stokes, 1989; Necowitz & Roznowski, 1994). More specifically, individuals with pleasant dispositions are expected to seek out, be sensitive to, and remember the positive aspects of their work environments, whereas individuals with unpleasant dispositions are expected to seek out, be sensitive to, and remember the negative aspects of their work environment. This means that the direction of attitude change is due dispositions as well as to changes in the environment, and future applications and research need to take this into account. Future research should also examine whether other dispositions, such as positive and negative affectivity, have similar effects on temporal changes in job attitudes.

#### *4.1. Limitations*

A few limitations of the current study should be noted. First, the sample was primarily male and Caucasian. It is thus unclear whether the results of the current study could be generalized to other populations, although analyses controlling for demographics showed that they probably had only a limited effect on the results. Second, the average respondent was 48 years old at Time 1. Others have noted that job attitudes are likely to be more stable among older workers than among younger workers (Gerhart, 1987). Thus, the stability of work-related attitudes found in the current study might have been greater than would be found in a younger sample. We should note, however, that controlling for age had little effect on the results. A third limitation is that all data were collected using self-report measures. Thus, common-method variance might have inflated the average overall strength of the relationships between variables.

#### *4.2. Practical implications*

The current study has important practical implications. Although it has been suggested that the presence of a dispositional component to work-related attitudes might severely limit the success of organizational efforts aimed at improving those attitudes (Staw & Ross, 1985), we disagree. Although dispositions clearly have an important role in theoretical models of job attitudes, the relationships between dispositions and job attitudes are far from perfect. Indeed, the current study found that correlations between affective disposition and work-related attitudes were generally in the .20's to .40's. Much of the unexplained variance in work-related attitudes is likely to be the result of environmental factors, many of which could be effectively manipulated by organizations in an effort to improve employee attitudes. In fact, employees who changed environments in this study had less stable attitudes, suggesting that environmental changes do play a role in attitude formation. Furthermore, dispositions affecting attitudes does not prevent the environment from affecting them (Gerhart, 2005). At most, the findings may simply tell us that organizations should work harder to provide a positive environment for employees (Staw & Cohen-Charash, 2005). Even though there is a dispositional effect on attitudes, therefore, there is room for optimism regarding efforts to improve attitudes.

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